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In Memoriam

ROBERT PARKER PARROTT.

FREDERIC De PEYSTER, LL.D., F.R.H.S.

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MEMOIR

OF

ROBERT PARKER PARROTT.

BY

FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, LL.D., F.R.H.S.

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NEW YORK:

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J. Watts de Peyster:

LL. D.

Master of Arts, Columbia College, of New York, 1872.
Rose Hill, in the Township of Red Hook, near Tivoli P. O., Duchess Co., N. Y.

September, 1874.

Judge Advocate, with the rank of Major, 1845.
Colonel N. Y. S. I. 1846; assigned for "*Meritorious Conduct*," 1849;
Brigadier-General for "*Important Service*" [first appointment—in N. Y. State—to that rank, hitherto elective] 1851, M. F. S. N. Y.
Adjutant-General, S. N. Y. 1855.
Brevet Major-General, S. N. Y., for "*Meritorious Services*,"
[first and only general officer receiving such an honor (the highest) from S. N. Y.,] and the only officer thus brevetted (Major-General) in the United States.]
by "*Special Act*," or "*Concurrent Resolution*," *New York State Legislature*, April, 1866.

LAWS OF NEW YORK, Vol. 2.—89th Session, 1866, Page 2142.
Concurrent Resolution requesting the Governor to confer upon Brigadier-General J. WATTS DE PUYSTER [de Peyster] the brevet rank of Major [General] in the National Guard of New York.*

Resolved, (if the Senate concur,) That it being a grateful duty to acknowledge in a suitable manner the services of a distinguished citizen of this State, rendered to the National Guard and to the United States prior to and during the Rebellion, the Governor be and he is hereby authorized and requested to confer upon Brig.-General J. WATTS DE PUYSTER [de Peyster] the *brevet rank* of *major-General* in the National Guard of New York, for meritorious services, which mark of honor shall be stated in the Commission conferred.

State of New York, in *Assembly*, April 9th, 1866.
The foregoing Resolution was duly passed. *By order of the Assembly.*
J. B. Cushman, Clerk.

State of New York, in *Senate*, April 20th, 1866.
The foregoing Resolution was duly passed. *By order of the Senate,*
**So in original.* Jas. Terwilliger, Clerk.

MILITARY AGENT, S. N. Y., (in Europe,) 1851-'3.
Honorary Member, Third Class, of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the U. S.
First Honorary Member Third (Army of the Potomac) Corps Union.
Member—10th June, 1872, Director—of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association.
MEMBER of the Netherlandish Literary Association
[*Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*] at Leyden, Holland.
RECIPIENT, 1856, of *Three Silver Medals* from H. R. M. Oscar, King of Sweden and Norway, &c., for a Military Biography of Leonard Torstenson, Field Marshal, Generalissimo;
of a *Gold Medal* in 1859, from Washington Hunt, Governor S. N. Y., for
"Efforts to Improve the Military System of New York," &c. &c.,
and Suggestions for a Paid Fire Department with Steam
Fire Engines, &c. &c.;
of a *Gold Medal* in 1859, from the Field and Staff Officers of his Command, 9th Brig., 3 Div., N. Y. S. Troops, "In testimony of their Esteem and Appreciation of his Efforts towards the Establishment of an efficient Militia," &c.; in 1870, of
a Magnificent Badge, Medal and Clasps voted at the Annual
Meeting of the Third Corps (Army of the Potomac)
Union, held at Boston, Mass., Thursday,
May 5th, 1870, when
A Resolution was adopted to present a *Gold Medal* of the value of $500, to Gen. J. Watts de Peyster, of New York, as a testimonial of the appreciation by the Corps of his *eminent services* in placing upon record the true history of its achievements, and in defending its commanders and their men from written abuse and misrepresentation;"
and of several other Badges, Medals, &c., for services in connection with the military service of the State of New York.
HONORARY MEMBER of the New Jersey and of the Minnesota Historical Societies, and of the Philokosmian Society of Pennsylvania College, *Gettysburg*;
of the Philosophian Society, *Missionary Institute, Selin's Grove*,
and of the Euterpean Society, *Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania*,
and of the Gamian Literary Society, of *Nebraska College, Nebraska City.*
HONORARY MEMBER of the N. Y. Burns Club.
(Burns was a member of the *Dumfries Volunteers*, of which Col. Arent Schuyler de Peyster, 8th or King's Foot B. A., was Colonel, to whom the "National Bard of Scotland" addressed, just before his death, in 1796, his "POEM ON LIFE,")
and Life Member of the St. Nicholas Society of New York,
(of which city Johannes de Peyster, *first of the name in the New World*, was *Schepen*, 1655, *Alderman*, 1666, *Burgomaster*, 1673, *Deputy Mayor*, 1677. *Mayoralty offered and refused.*)
MEMBER
of the New York, of the Rhode Island (Newport) and of the Pennsylvania Historical Societies, of the Military Association of the State of New York,
and of the Century Club, New York City.
LIFE MEMBER
of the Historical Society of Michigan,
of the New York Gallery of Fine Arts, and Director of the N. Y. Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb,
and of the Numismatic and Archæological Society of New York.
LIFE MEMBER or FELLOW of the American Geographical Society; Patron of the Association for the Benefit of Colored Orphans, and of the New York Dispensary; Life Director of the American Tract, and Life
Member of the American Bible Society, N. Y.
CORRESPONDING MEMBER
of the State Historical Societies of Maine, of Vermont, of Rhode Island, (Providence,) of Connecticut, and of Wisconsin; of the Long Island and of the Buffalo Historical Societies; of the New England Historic-Genealogical Society; of the Quebec Literary & Historical Society;
of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society
of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania;
etc. etc. etc.

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At a special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Hoffman Fire Insurance Company of New York, Mr. M. F. Hodges, President of the Board, in appropriate terms announced to the Directors the death of their esteemed associate and friend, Robert Parker Parrott, Esq.; whereupon, on motion of Mr. George M. Miller, it was

Resolved, That a Committee, consisting of Frederic de Peyster, LL.D., and the President of the Board, be appointed to prepare a brief memoir and suitable resolutions.

In accordance with which, Mr. de Peyster, as Chairman of the Committee, at a meeting called for the purpose, presented and read the following memoir.

OFFICERS OF THE

Hoffman Fire Insurance Co.

M. F. HODGES, *President.*

SAMUEL M. CRAFT, *Vice-Pres't.*

JOHN D. MACINTYRE, *Secretary.*

DIRECTORS.

William O. Hoffman,	James L. Morgan,
Frederic De Peyster,	C. D. Leverich,
Samuel V. Hoffman,	Albert Ward,
George M. Miller,	Robert P. Parrott,
Robert Schell,	Daniel L. Pettee,
Walton H. Peckham,	A. Dennison Williams,
William O. Giles,	John H. Watson,
Henry Lewis,	Marcus F. Hodges,
Charles B. Hoffman,	V. K. Stevenson,
Robert L. Kennedy,	Samuel M. Craft.

MEMOIR

OF

ROBERT PARKER PARROTT.

ROBERT PARKER PARROTT was born in Lee, Strafford County, New Hampshire, on the 5th of October, 1804. At the age of sixteen he entered the United States Military Academy at West Point (having been appointed from his native State), and graduated from that institution in 1824, ranking third in honor in a class consisting of thirty-one members. He was immediately appointed a Brevet Second Lieutenant, and assigned to the First Regiment of Artillery, United States Army; and on the same day (July 1, 1824) was commissioned Second Lieutenant of the Third Regiment of Artillery. On the 29th of August, 1824, he was appointed Assistant Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy in the Military Academy at

West Point, which position he held until the 8th of September, 1826, when he became Assistant Professor of Mathematics. On the 14th of September, 1828, he was made Principal Assistant Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy, and remained thus engaged during the ensuing twelve months, at the expiration of which he was ordered to garrison duty at Fort Constitution, New Hampshire. On the 27th of August, 1831, he was promoted to be first Lieutenant in the Third Artillery, and assigned to duty at Fort Independence, Boston Harbor, where he remained till the early part of 1834. The ensuing two years were passed on ordnance duty; and in 1836 he served on staff duty in the military operations against the Creek Indians. The same year he was promoted to the rank of Captain in the Ordnance Department (his commission bearing date January 13, 1836,) and served for a short time as Assistant in the Ordnance Bureau at Washington, D. C. He was afterwards assigned to duty at the West Point Iron and Cannon Foundry, located at Cold Spring, Putnam County, New York, which was the most extensive establishment, for the manufacture of heavy guns, in the United States. The Foundry Association—then under the presidency of Mr. Gouverneur Kemble—perceiving the ability of the young officer, made him such advantageous offers that he was induced to resign (October 31, 1836,) his commission

in the Army, and accept the position of Superintendent of the West Point Foundry. He assumed the duties of this charge towards the close of 1836, and devoted himself with all the ardor of a youthful mind to the chosen work of his life. His intimacy with the family of Mr. Gouverneur Kemble resulted in an ardent attachment to Miss Mary Kemble—a sister of that gentleman—which was reciprocated, and their marriage took place in 1839. A few years later he was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Putnam County, and for a period of three years (from 1844 to 1847) discharged the duties of this judicial position with honor to himself and eminent satisfaction to the community. He was at all times regarded as a representative man in the district in which he resided, but was too actively engaged in the favorite work of his life to care to hold any prominent public office. His marked interest in the advancement of the cause of education, of which he was a zealous supporter, led him, however, in 1853, to accept the office of Superintendent of Schools, tendered him by the people of Philipstown, and his best efforts were exerted in discharging the duties of this congenial trust.

The position of Captain Parrott at the West Point Foundry, gave him abundant opportunities for prosecuting experiments in his favorite fields of research; and from 1836 down to the commencement of hostili-

ties with the seceding States, these trials had been continually going on, with the final result of giving to the country and the world the famous rifled gun and projectiles which bear the name of their distinguished inventor.

These guns were first introduced into actual use at the Battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861; and from that date until the close of the civil war, were extensively used by the Federal army and navy. Captain Parrott succeeded in obtaining a longer range with his guns than had ever before been attained by artillery. The famous "Swamp Angel" (so called) was estimated to have a range of seven miles, which is doubtless exaggerated, although it is an ascertained fact that its range fell little short of six miles. A singular fact in connection with this particular gun, is that, although the muzzle was blown off, the efficacy of the piece was not noticeably impaired. It is worthy of mention, also, that a thirty-pounder Parrott gun mounted at Cumming's Point, and used in the bombardment of Charleston, South Carolina, withstood the extraordinary test of being fired four thousand six hundred and six times before bursting.

A later work of Captain Parrott was the making of an improved mortar for the Life-Saving Service, which was not the least successful of his inventions. Upwards of forty years of patient study and arduous labor had placed Mr. Parrott in the possession of an

ample fortune. Unlike many persons of large wealth, he did not defer his benefactions till after death. On the contrary, preferring to act the almoner during life, he was ever ready in the work of Christian charity, distributing with a liberal hand to the needy and deserving, and contributing freely to the aid of religious, humane, and educational projects. He expended freely of his means in the work of beautifying the village in which he resided, and in providing a better class of residences for his workmen, and was active at all times in promoting the best interests of the community. Besides numerous and liberal contributions to the support of the church at large, he was a steady supporter of the cause of religion in the parish of which he was a resident.

A most enduring monument of his faith and zeal is the magnificent church known as St. Mary's-in-the-Highlands (pronounced, from its massive and enduring character, as well as the grand simplicity of its proportions, to be without a rival in this country), which—including cost of land—was erected at an expense of about one hundred thousand dollars, the entire amount, with the exception of five thousand dollars contributed by Mr. Frederic P. James, being the liberal gift of Mr. Parrott.

Possessed of an excellent constitution, which his active life and regular habits still further strengthened, he remained engaged in his business duties up to the

day of his contracting the fatal illness which terminated his existence.

The parishioners of St. Mary's missed him one Sunday morning from his accustomed place in church, and inquiry elicited the fact that he was prevented from attending the services by a sudden cold. Towards the close of the day the physicians in attendance found that he was suffering from congestion of the lungs, and, despite the most careful and scientific treatment, the patient breathed his last on the morning of Monday, the 24th of December, 1877, and within a few hours of being taken ill.

The sorrow which pervaded the community upon his decease becoming generally known, was both profound and universal. His large-hearted benevolence, pure life, and laudable public spirit, had endeared him to all, and the grief which the news of his death occasioned was no less heartfelt than it was universal. Identified for a period of forty years with the village and vicinity of Cold Spring, the prosperity of which locality was so largely the result of his intelligence and energy, his sudden taking away—although in the full maturity of his life—was to nearly all of his fellow-citizens like the loss of a dear friend. The workmen of the West Point Foundry, among whom he had passed more than half his life, and those employed in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, by the Kemble Coal and Iron Com-

pany, and at the Riddlesburg furnaces (over both of which he had ably exercised the direction and superintendence), deplored his loss as a serious misfortune. Nor was the sorrow occasioned by his death merely a local one. The Ordnance Department of the United States Army, with which he had held the most intimate relations for so long a period, and which had thoroughly appreciated his eminent scientific attainments, as well as his genial nature and high soldierly qualities, expressed the deepest and tenderest grief—General S. V. Benét, Chief of Ordnance, declaring in a letter to the proprietors of the West Point Foundry, that "Not one of all the virtues that keeps green the memory of the dead can be denied him; but above all it can be written on his tomb—he was a good man." Hosts of friends throughout the country, and many both at home and abroad, who, through business relations with the kindly, unassuming, learned and Christian gentleman, had learned to appreciate his worth, shared in the widespread grief occasioned by his loss, and extended to his bereaved family the warmest sympathy.

The faithful supporter of religion, the earnest friend of education, the zealous citizen, eminent in science, active in the discharge of duty, sympathetic and liberal in charity — as philanthropist, judge, scholar, soldier, gentleman, and Christian, his char-

acter was essentially based on a strict sense of duty, which he carried into all the relations of life. In this connection we are reminded of the words of the talented author of "Guesses at Truth," who says:

"Duty is above all consequences, and often, at a crisis of difficulty, commands us to throw them overboard. *Fiat Justitia pereat mundus.* It commands us to look neither to the right, nor to the left, but straight onward. Hence, every single act of Duty is altogether an act of Faith. It is performed in the assurance that God will take care of the consequences, and will so order the course of the world that, whatever the immediate results may be, His word shall not return to Him empty."

And the same author also remarks: "The wisdom which aims at something nobler and more lasting than the kingdom of this world, may now and then find that the kingdom of this world will fall into its lap. How much longer and more widely has Aristotle reigned than Alexander! with how much more power and glory Luther than Charles the Fifth!"

Seneca has said that "a great, a good, and a right mind is a kind of divinity lodged in the flesh; it came from Heaven, and to Heaven it must return."

A far nobler sentiment than this of Seneca was

uttered by Job, in a much more distant age, which is still being reverberated, and will be also in every succeeding age, until Time shall be no more.

"I know," he said, "that my Redeemer liveth, and will at the latter day stand on earth; and that though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God."

This is the Christian's hope, and the anchor of his soul. It was the guiding-star of the life of our departed associate.

On the conclusion of the reading of this memoir, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, It has pleased Divine Providence to remove from the scene of his earthly labors and acknowledged usefulness, Robert Parker Parrott, our late distinguished associate; we, the Directors of the Hoffman Fire Insurance Company, being desirous of expressing our high appreciation of the public and private character of the deceased, hereby unanimously adopt the following Resolutions:

Resolved, That we share in the general sorrow which extends far beyond this community, at the loss of a citizen whose virtues, public services, and scientific attainments place him among the eminent men of our country.

Resolved, That in the life of the deceased, fully outlined in the preceding biographical sketch, we recognize a purity of character, a devotion to principle, and a patriotic love of country, which, combined with his practical genius

and philosophical attainments, make us regard his death as a national loss.

Resolved, That we consider his career as a soldier, his skill as an inventor, and his Christian and gentlemanly character as edifying in the highest degree, and, with his scientific attainments, such as to render his death a personal loss, not only to each and all of the members of this Board, but to the community at large, to whom he was well known.

Resolved, That these resolutions be recorded in the minutes of this Board, and a copy be transmitted to the family of the late Captain Robert Parker Parrott, as expressing our sincere sorrow for the loss of this late associate and friend, and our profound sympathy with his bereaved relatives.

FEB 23 1909